CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 4 September 1997, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Goonetilleke (Sri Lanka)

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The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 777th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

At the outset, I should like, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, to extend a warm welcome to the newly appointed representative of Poland, Ambassador Krzysztof Jakubowski, who is attending the Conference for the first time today. Before joining the Conference, Ambassador Jakubowski held important functions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including the post of Under-Secretary of State. I am sure that his wide experience in United Nations matters in general and disarmament in particular will be a valuable asset to this Conference. I wish to assure him of our full cooperation and support.

I should also like to welcome the Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel, Ambassador Eitan Bentsur, who will be our first speaker for today.

In addition to the representative of Israel, I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of Ireland, Indonesia and, I believe, Australia.

I now give the floor to the Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel, Ambassador Eitan Bentsur.

Mr. BENTSUR (Israel): Mr. President, let me begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. With your long experience, we are assured of skilful steering of the work of the Conference, as it moves towards the General Assembly. At the same time, I would like to express our thanks to your predecessor, Ambassador Mária Krasnohorská of Slovakia. I also take the opportunity to acknowledge and express our appreciation to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, and to his deputy, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, for their effective support.

In days of old, the prophets of Israel gave voice to the message of universal peace and disarmament, to which the Jewish people have held fast and which is now Israel's heritage.

> "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, nor shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid" (Micah, chap. 4, verses 3-4).

The goal to which Israel constantly aspires is to live in a region where comprehensive and lasting relations of peace prevail, based on reconciliation between peoples, good-neighbourliness, open borders, and trust among nations.

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Israel wishes to see the whole region come around to these fundamental principles and norms, which should govern relations between States and have been the backbone of transition from war and conflict to peace and reconciliation in other regions.

An agreement on these principles and norms in our region will provide a catalyst to the peace process and, moreover, pave the way for arms control and regional security arrangements.

The basis for coexistence between Israel and Arab States was laid in the peace treaties between Israel and its Egyptian and Jordanian neighbours. The Madrid Conference, to which I had the honour of contributing, also bears the special emblem of the "pioneers of peace", to whom the present Government of Israel is direct heir.

Mutual Israeli-Palestinian recognition and the firm commitment of the present Israeli Government to honour the Oslo Accords are also closely tied to peace realities forged with our close neighbours, Egypt and Jordan. One should not forget that in parallel with the political negotiations to achieve and promote comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East, the partners to peace should also have the will and capacity to contain the dangers and enemies of peace.

In its pursuit of peace, the Government of Israel is guided by a number of principles, which I would like to elaborate. First, peace must come with security. Peace must enhance security for all concerned. Security is neither an obsession nor a blind belief. It touches upon our very existence in a region where threats and instability still prevail, to the detriment of a peaceful and cooperative regional relationship.

The present political process, which reflects a growing recognition of the futility of the use of force as a means to advance political goals, has not yet fundamentally and irreversibly changed the basic strategic setting or, more correctly, the general state of threat in which Israel - and not only Israel - exists and operates. The willingness to renounce the threat or use of force, as well as the obligation to settle conflicts by peaceful means, is not yet shared by all our neighbours. War and violence are still considered and indeed advocated by some as legitimate instruments of policy. Limitations inherent in arms control regimes are deemed by some to be marginal obstacles to be ignored or, worse, as convenient loopholes to gain access to technologies necessary to produce weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. Israel is confronted with heavily armed regimes, which profess various degrees of hostility toward it and which possess conventional and non-conventional arsenals.

In this geo-strategic setting, Israel finds itself small in size with no strategic depth. It is entirely dependent on outside sources of energy and is also poor in other natural resources, including water. The density of its population and industrial centres makes Israel especially vulnerable to

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attacks. Massive quantities of bombs and missiles, capable of indiscriminate damage and injury to the civilian population, are certainly defined by us as weapons of mass destruction.

Israel's national security doctrine and capabilities are designed to offset these strategic vulnerabilities and disadvantageous disparities.

Second, it is imperative to preserve the peace process, free of terrorism and violence. Terrorism is supported, financed, encouraged and practised by radical regimes in our region. It has assumed many forms, which are designed to disrupt the daily life of the civilian population, to undermine its resolve and to damage the economy of Israel. Above all, terrorism aims at derailing the peace process which the Government of Israel and others in the region and beyond are striving to advance.

Third, regional cooperation as well as economic and social development are critical factors in ensuring peace and stability in the long run. Israel wishes to share, as an equal partner, in the creation of regional cooperation. We do not seek to impose economic cooperation on our neighbours, nor do we wish to oblige them to cooperate with us. Still, we firmly believe that the evolution of cooperation and normalization across Arab-Israel boundaries is essential, not only to move the region to a more peaceful environment and to give true meaning and deep roots to relations of peace, but also to give Israel and the other parties a genuine sense of security that will, in turn, facilitate more ambitious arms control undertakings.

Fourth, peace and normalization are one and indivisible. Normalization is the natural product of conflict resolution. Consequently, the logic of peace and dialogue dictates that reconciliation and normalization will not be held hostage to other ends. Reconciliation between the peoples of the region and normalization among its countries must cease for ever the residue of ideological negativeness and negation.

Israel aspires to achieve peace and security for all the peoples of the Middle East, with a life free of threats and from the use of force. In this context, we hope that the day will come when a regional security framework encompassing all countries of the Middle East, as the region shall be defined, will be realized to provide a cooperative multilateral response to all the security problems of the Middle East.

The advantages of the regional approach are several - in the first instance, as a means of building trust and confidence, and thereafter of putting arms control and disarmament mechanisms into place. They by far outweigh the global approach, which cannot provide a response to the unique security problems of the Middle East in general, and to those of Israel in particular. For this reason, Israel welcomed the establishment of the Working Group on Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS), in the context of the multilateral talks within the framework of the Middle East peace process initiated in Madrid. This group is, in our view, an essential pillar to support the peace process as a whole and an integral part of it.

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In this respect, the Middle East could certainly learn from the experiences of other regions - Europe, Latin America, Africa and the Pacific, where genuine efforts on the regional level have created mutually beneficial regional security frameworks.

In its approach to this process, Israel is guided by the need to set ambitious objectives, the pursuit of which should be conducted in a pragmatic and realistic manner. Progress should be sought wherever and whenever possible - and its pace should be determined by conditions prevailing in the region. After peaceful relations and reconciliation are established among all States in the region, Israel will endeavour to establish in the Middle East - through direct negotiations among all its members - a zone free of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, as well as ballistic missiles, based on mutual and effective verification.

No other forums that lack the unique regional features of the Madrid Multilateral Working Group on Arms Control and Regional Security can bring about meaningful progress in realizing such an ambitious arms control agenda.

Until that hoped-for time, Israel will strive, as first steps, to conduct a regional security dialogue and to implement confidence-building measures that will increase openness and build trust and cooperation, thereby making a significant contribution to ease tensions, reduce the prospects of surprise attacks, diminish the levels of suspicion and prevent armed conflict. The trust that will be built, and the parallel progress in the bilateral peace process between Israel and its neighbours, will enable the beginning of negotiations on more ambitious arms control measures.

In its concept of, and thinking on, arms control and a regional security framework, Israel is guided by several premises. First, the arms control and regional security process should enhance the security of each and every one of the States taking part in it, thereby contributing to the stability and security of the region as a whole. Second, all steps and measures to be adopted throughout the arms control and regional security process must be designed so as to increase the overall stability of the region. At no point should they diminish the security of any State, nor should they allow, at any stage of the process, any State or group of States to abuse them in order to acquire a military advantage over the others. Third, each State is entitled to an equally high level of overall security, defined as freedom from threats to its existence and well-being. Thus, structural vulnerabilities should be compensated for by offsetting capabilities. Requirements of self-defence and deterrence of aggression are the only legitimate needs that should be taken into consideration in the arms control and regional security process. Fourth, every State in the region has the right to define the threat it considers relevant to its own security. All States of the region will be called upon to do so with a view to having the arms control and the regional security process provide adequate responses to them. Fifth, the process and the agreements that may be achieved should take into account not only threats and capabilities from individual States (and non-State entities), but also threats

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and capabilities deriving from coalitions and treaties as well as from political and regional military alliances and accords between States of the region.

We regret that the promising discussions and activities of the Arms Control and Regional Security Working Group have been brought to a halt by a few, who would wish to impose certain conditions and an extraneous agenda on its work. We are hopeful of an early resumption of the Group's work and we look forward to that.

Against this background, let me expand on some process guidelines of our arms control and regional security approach as outlined above. First, the primacy of the peace process, and of the eventual peace which is to be durable and comprehensive. All regional security and arms control issues should be dealt with in this context. Second, the peace process is a regional one and must embrace every country of the region. Within this regional framework, confidence-building and security measures have to be developed. Only on such a basis can regional arms control arrangements be achieved. Third, a step-by-step approach is required. Any attempt to advance items on the overall agenda which can only be addressed at a later stage in the process will be self-defeating. Fourth, and ultimately, it is the progress achieved in the transformation of the region into a more peaceful, stable and secure environment that will govern the pace and scope of arms control measures that will be negotiated and effectively implemented in the region.

As I have indicated, Israel, when assessing its own situation, attaches primacy to regional arrangements which attempt to provide an answer to security and stability problems in the entire region. At the same time, this approach has not prevented Israel from supporting or taking part in the concerted effort of the international community to curb proliferation of either conventional or non-conventional weapons and ballistic missiles and, where appropriate, to endorse global agreements which could complement those to be established at the regional level.

Indeed, Israel has been actively supporting and participating in efforts of the international community to prevent the proliferation of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, not least through export control mechanisms, inspired by those of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), the Australian Group (AG), and the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), of which Israel is an adherent.

With its commitment to non-proliferation in mind, Israel voted in favour of United Nations General Assembly resolution 2373 of 1968, adopting the NPT. It is satisfied with the indefinite extension of the Treaty. At the same time, for the reasons I have elaborated, Israel does not find in the NPT an adequate response to its own security problems and regional concerns - and that without mentioning violations of NPT obligations by a regional party to the Treaty.

Israel joins the community of nations in welcoming the entry into force of the Convention banning the development, production, stockpiling and use of

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chemical weapons and mandating their complete destruction. Israel is proud to have been one of the original, founding signatory States of the Convention. Our signature of the Convention and the subsequently active role we took in the joint endeavour to craft it into workable mechanisms reflect in general Israel's vision of the world in which it wishes to exist and prosper - in particular its continuing interest, which is shared by many other countries, to preserve the Convention's core balance between a State's duty to demonstrate compliance and its right to protect itself from intrusive and abusive encroachment on its security and its commercial and proprietary interests. By signing the Convention, Israel signalled its hope that others in its region will soon follow suit.

Israel belongs to those member States which have not yet ratified the Convention. This should come as no surprise to the world community cognizant of the unique strategic and political environment in which Israel still operates today. At the signing ceremony in Paris in 1993, Israel's Foreign Minister openly stated Israel's position that "the Chemical Weapons Convention must refer to our region and that the region at large must adhere to its principles". In that context, Israel then made it clear that it would seek to ratify the Convention subject to regional concerns as well as to its constitutional constraints and legislative timetable.

These considerations remain no less valid today. Israel is aware of, indeed it welcomes, the fact that certain Arab States have signed, and that some have even ratified the Convention. However, it is unfortunately also a well-known reality that none of the CW-capable or suspected CW-armed Arab States have signed, let alone ratified, the Chemical Weapons Convention. Indeed, key non-signatory Arab States have indicated collectively that they would not change their position even if Israel ratifies the Convention. Among them are countries which in the past have resorted to actual use of chemical weapons and which are believed to be developing capabilities in this field, even as the world is pledging to forsake and eradicate for ever all chemical weapons. From Israel's perspective, not only have CW threats against it not receded in recent years, but they have even gained in saliency and acuteness. What I have described, therefore, must not necessarily be construed as prejudging the outcome of a future Israeli decision on the matter of the ratification, or of the continued Israeli support for the Convention. Favourable changes in the security climate will, of course, favourably affect Israel's attitude on the ratification issue.

Israel is a party to the Convention on the use of certain conventional weapons which may be excessively injurious or have indiscriminate effects (CCW). Israel ratified this Convention in March 1995 and participated in the Review Conference, which amended Protocol II of the Convention on Landmines and adopted a new Protocol IV on Blinding Laser Weapons. Israel is presently reviewing the Revised Landmines Protocol and the new Blinding Laser Protocol. Moreover, we support the efforts being made to extend accession to the CCW by as many States as possible, particularly in the Middle East region.

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Israel has declared a moratorium on the exportation of anti-personnel landmines and has recently extended it for a further three-year period until 1999. Israel has joined efforts by the international community in clearing landmines in Angola. We are presently evaluating the possibilities of using Israeli expertise in mine clearance in other parts of the world.

Due to Israel's unique situation in the Middle East, involving an ongoing threat of hostilities from neighbouring and regional States, as well as terrorist threats and actions along its borders, Israel is still obliged to maintain its ability to use anti-personnel landmines as necessary, for self-defence in general and along the borders in particular. Any such use of anti-personnel landmines is in accordance with the requirements of the CCW. Accordingly, Israel is unable, at this juncture, to commit itself to a total ban on the use of anti-personnel landmines until effective alternative measures are available to ensure the protection of civilians threatened on a daily basis by terrorists, and to ensure the protection of Israeli defence forces operating in areas of armed conflict. At the same time, Israel supports a gradual process in which each State will undertake to cease proliferation of anti-personnel landmines, accept restrictions on possible use and, once circumstances permit, a ban on the production and use of anti-personnel landmines.

Israel would like to give its assurances that within the constraints mentioned above, it will continue to be a part of the global effort to reduce the need for, and the use of, anti-personnel landmines.

Israel welcomes the continuing operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the recent report by the Secretary-General on the Register. Israel has responded on a year-by-year basis since the inception of the Register to the request, contained in relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, to provide data on its imports and exports of arms. A similar attitude by all regional parties in the Middle East would certainly contribute to confidence and trust-building in the region.

Israel's decision to sign the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is another manifestation and extension of its long-standing non-proliferation policy as described today. We joined the Partial Test-Ban Treaty (PTBT) as early as January 1964 and we are now moving forward on the CTBT.

In this context, I would like to recall my country's contribution, politically and conceptually, to the negotiations and to the drafting of the CTBT. Although the CTBT language does not satisfactorily address some of our major concerns, we supported the final text. We co-sponsored the resolution at the United Nations General Assembly and were among the first to sign thereafter. Israel also attaches great importance to the attitude of its regional neighbours to the Treaty. Their decision to become a party to the Treaty will play a supportive role at a regional level and will contribute to peace and security in the Middle East. In considering the issue of ratifying the CTBT, Israel will take into account inter alia developments in our region, including the adherence to the Treaty by key States.

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By adopting these steps and policies, Israel has demonstrated its willingness to be involved in a responsible and serious manner in the efforts of the international community to prevent the spread of conventional as well as non-conventional weapons.

Israel welcomes the agreements signed in recent years between the Russian Federation and the United States regarding their strategic weapons. These agreements, which reflect the new and promising climate in relations between those two States and their intensive dialogue on strategic issues, constitute a major guarantee for peace and security in the world today. Israel also welcomes those bilateral and regional developments in different parts of the world which contribute to national security as well as to the regional arms control and stability of those concerned. We are hopeful that the political and security environment in our own region will further improve so as to allow similar achievements.

Israel was recently admitted as a member of the Conference on Disarmament. We waited for some years for membership in this important body - the "single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum" of the family of nations. We appreciate the efforts and the tenacity of many delegations and governments to achieve the recent expansion of the CD. We agree with all those who urge the CD to keep the issue of its membership under constant and renewed scrutiny, in order to better reflect changing international and regional realities and the desire of others to contribute to the work of the CD.

We did our apprenticeship as an observer and, in effect, as an active non-member State in the CD for several years and especially throughout the CTBT negotiations, which was beneficial to us and, if I may say so, was proof of our earnestness. We believe that CD membership carries with it heavy responsibilities and we pledge to do our utmost in discharging our duties as a new member.

On the issue of the programme of work of the CD, Israel is of the view that the CD agenda has to strike an appropriate balance between the desirable and the possible. Since 1990, the CD has successfully negotiated the CWC and the CTBT and for that it deserves our appreciation. In the context of the CD programme of work, it must be remembered that the millions who have perished as a result of wars, armed conflict and civil strife since 1945 bear witness to the sheer and utter destructiveness of weapons classified as "conventional". The problems therefore lie with the reckless use of arms, of all categories, by irresponsible regimes.

As the tensions which reflected the cold war era give way to growing global confidence and cooperation, the international community should now turn more of its attention and energies towards many as yet unresolved regional conflicts, which are characterized by unprecedented conventional arms build-ups and, in some instances, also by the clandestine pursuit of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. Apparently, Iraq and North Korea are the recent examples in this regard, but surely not the only ones - nor the last. Iran is another example of a State which is currently engaged in acquiring

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non-conventional capabilities, in a manner which is not consistent with its international obligations. Israel calls upon the international community to prevent such dangerous developments which will further destabilize the Middle East and pose a grave threat to many countries.

In view of their heavy responsibilities, CD members should strive, in our view, to set a correspondingly realistic and pragmatic programme of work, the pursuit of which will make our world more, rather than less, secure, stable and peaceful.

The CD cannot assume the tasks of other frameworks - bilateral, multilateral, regional or otherwise. It cannot dictate nor impose either agenda items or contents or timetables. The CD should continue to freely negotiate by consensus. Those treaties to be negotiated and concluded in the CD should be subject to truly universal adherence and should not remain legally binding instruments to which only like-minded States subscribe.

One more principle that should guide our future work in the CD has to do with the verification mechanism of treaties. We should maintain a careful balance between verification regimes that are reliable and effective to assure compliance, and the need to protect vital national security interests or industrial-commercial concerns. Likewise, we should not lose sight of the absolute necessity to complement effective verification with reliable enforcement to ascertain that arms control obligations are not taken lightly, and countries that behave otherwise are punished rather than rewarded.

We hope that members of the CD will be able to bridge their differences and soon embark on constructive and effective work, which has been the hallmark of the CD for some years. By so doing, the CD will rise to the main challenge of the twenty-first century, namely, that of making our globe a much more peaceful and secure place for all mankind.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Israel for his statement and for his kind words to me. I now give the floor to the representative of Ireland, Ambassador Anderson.

Ms. ANDERSON (Ireland): Mr. President, firstly, may I congratulate you very warmly on your rather unexpected but very welcome arrival in the Chair as President? We wish you well during the period ahead. I would also like to express our great appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Krasnohorská, for her very skilful handling of the presidency during her time in office. As we come to the end of our 1997 session, I would like to offer some brief reflections on topics which have been at the centre of our work for the past year.

We have had many difficult discussions relating to possible negotiations within the CD on anti-personnel landmines. These discussions have taken place in parallel to the unfolding of the Ottawa Process, which has steadily gained momentum and attracted an increasing number of participants. As we know,

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negotiations are currently taking place in Oslo which are expected to lead to the signing in Ottawa in December of an international agreement to ban the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel landmines.

We are encouraged to note the number of delegations who announced here in recent weeks that they would participate in the Oslo meeting with a view to signing an agreement in Ottawa. At the same time, there is a somewhat disturbing trend in many of the references to the Ottawa Process we hear in the CD. Some delegations have appeared to argue that negotiations in the CD on APLs will be essential because any agreement emerging from the Ottawa Process will not be immediately universal. This argument implies that if an international agreement, negotiated in good faith through an open-ended process, does not achieve instant universality then, in effect, negotiations on the same issue must be reopened in a more exclusive forum in an effort to capture the non-signatories.

It strikes us as odd for this, of all bodies, to suggest that an agreement which fails to attract immediate global support is so intrinsically flawed as to require a relaunching of the negotiation in the immediate aftermath of its opening for signature. We might well ask ourselves what implications such an approach would have for other disarmament negotiations.

We can confidently expect that, by January 1998, there will be an international agreement banning APLs signed by a very large number of countries. It is difficult to envisage how the signatories to such an agreement - among whom there will be, we presume, many represented in this chamber - can then embark on a separate negotiation dealing with exactly the same prohibitions with the final objective of concluding another, inevitably less stringent, regime. If we were ready to accept such a possibility before the ink is dry on the Ottawa agreement then, of course, the Ottawa agreement would never attain universality. Why should any country rush to sign the Ottawa agreement when there might be a possibility of a fresh set of negotiations in Geneva on the same issue?

In our view, there is potential here for an extremely confusing legal situation which could complicate the international effort to ban APLs. A CD agreement on APLs, if it ever came into existence, would exist alongside the Ottawa agreement and the strengthened restrictions introduced by amended Protocol II of the Inhumane Weapons Convention. Rather than having mutually reinforcing texts, we risk contradictory approaches and a weakening of the growing international resolve to end the scourge of landmines.

In summary, while we fully accept that any APL ban must seek to attract the widest possible adherence, especially from major producers and users of landmines, we are distinctly cautious about arguments which appear to downplay, in advance, the status and significance of the agreement that will be signed in Ottawa.

The second issue which has provoked torrents of words over the past year is the question of future negotiations on nuclear disarmament. Over the past week, we have seen how even the references in the CD's annual report to the

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failure of the CD to make any progress can become the subject of contentious negotiations. Differences over how best to reflect a failure are hardly a creditable end to an indifferent year for the CD.

Early in the 1997 session, I indicated our view that the step-by-step approach to nuclear disarmament had produced sufficient progress to justify continuing confidence in its utility. The next step in this approach should be the opening of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off convention in accordance with the Shannon mandate which the CD has adopted by consensus.

At the same time, my delegation supported calls for a mechanism in the CD, an ad hoc committee if you will, which would permit us to examine what further multilateral negotiations the CD might usefully undertake in support of the goal of the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons. Such an ad hoc committee could examine any proposal presented to it, including the programme of action presented by members of the G-21 in August 1996, the report of the Canberra Commission and whatever other proposals delegations would wish to put forward. The discussions under such a mechanism should not be rhetorical but pragmatic, an effort to map out further possible multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament while taking full account of the progress made in the bilateral or plurilateral negotiations between the nuclear Powers. We see no reason why these discussions should not take place in parallel to negotiations on fissile cut-off.

Over the past year there has been little progress, despite the best efforts of successive CD Presidents, in reconciling the differing approaches to nuclear disarmament. There is some sign of an emerging middle ground in the CD which appears willing to explore the compromises necessary to make progress. There are also, however, indications that the positions of some delegations have become even more entrenched.

Cynics might suggest that the current impasse serves the interest of any delegation which, for whatever reason, does not want to see immediate progress on nuclear disarmament. My delegation has not yet succumbed to such cynicism. However, if we reconvene here in 1998 only to settle comfortably back into our trenches, the cynics will have their day and the credibility of this body will be further called into question.

The current rate of progress towards multilateral disarmament is unacceptably slow. The international community needs now, not in the next millennium, to consider how best to translate the goal of the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons into a more concrete reality; to explore and agree how and by what means this goal might be achieved. Such a consideration should be a means to help us to appreciate the problems and difficulties, which might require multilaterally negotiated solutions, associated with the elimination of nuclear weapons. It seems to us that the CD, with its accumulated experience of complex disarmament negotiations on weapons of mass destruction, is the ideal forum in which to carry forward discussions on the technical and legal questions which must be confronted if we are to achieve the elimination of nuclear weapons.

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We very much hope that, before the next session, all delegations will undertake a profound reassessment of their positions on the crucial issue, the priority issue, of nuclear disarmament negotiations. To facilitate our further deliberations, we see scope for closer cooperation between delegations, no matter what their regional affiliation, who have a flexible rather than a dogmatic approach on this central issue of our time.

Finally, I should like to address briefly the issue of CD expansion. I would be dishonest if I did not express our disappointment at the lack of progress on this matter. We regret the hiatus between January 1997, when the CD agreed to appoint a Coordinator on expansion, and June 1997, when the appointment was finally made. We thank Ambassador Kreid for his work, which had to be conducted within a very limited time-frame.

What has been established so far is not encouraging. While it seems there is agreement in principle in the CD to a further expansion, many delegations have qualified their agreement with a series of caveats and conditions, all of which are meticulously recorded in the Special Coordinator's report. Reading through all of this, it is difficult to avoid an impression of a lack of political will on the part of many members to tackle the expansion issue in a meaningful way.

We are grateful to those delegations who both publicly and privately have encouraged us to maintain our efforts to secure membership. We hope that these and other delegations will press for early progress in 1998 in addressing the issues raised in Ambassador Kreid's report.

While developments so far offer little ground for optimism, we continue to hope that a more positive and fair-minded attitude will prevail and that we may yet see a real seriousness of purpose on the part of this Conference in addressing the enlargement issue.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Ireland for her statement and for her kind words to me. I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia, Ambassador Tarmidzi.

Mr. TARMIDZI (Indonesia): Mr. President, since this is the first time that my delegation takes the floor under your presidency, like previous speakers before me, allow me at the outset to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I am confident that with your extensive experience and under your able guidance, we will be able to achieve significant progress in our work at this particularly difficult juncture. At the same time, I also wish to express our satisfaction and gratitude to your distinguished predecessors, Ambassador Diallo of Senegal, Ambassador Berdennikov of the Russian Federation and Ambassador Krasnohorská of Slovakia, for their tireless efforts to achieve progress in our deliberations and negotiations during their presidency. I also use this occasion to welcome the new members and distinguished Ambassadors to the Conference on Disarmament.

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In taking the floor today, I am fully aware that my delegation has somewhat refrained from making many interventions or statements, especially during the second and this current session of 1997. I can assure you that this is certainly not because we do not want to participate or contribute to the proceedings, but simply because we did not want to complicate your job or that of previous Presidents unnecessarily. More importantly, I can assure you that our silence should be understood to mean that we are flexible. When we say flexible, we mean genuine flexibility in the spirit of cooperation and compromise in view of the different positions of member countries, including Indonesia.

In my previous statement delivered during the first session, we had stated our position on the various issues and we shall maintain this position in our efforts to find solutions in our negotiations in the CD. In this context, I would like to re-emphasize that our flexibility means that we are open to any proposal presented at this forum, and that we are ready to discuss it as long as it can bring valuable progress to push our deliberations or negotiations forward. When we say we are open, this also means that we can accept the decision of the CD to discuss all matters pertaining to the procedural as well as to the substantive items contained in the agenda, either in its entirety or partially, if the members so wish. Again, this is for the sake of the credibility of the CD.

However, if we are of the view that the agenda should be based on the existing Decalogue, it is because we think - and I believe that this view is also shared by most members - the Decalogue is still relevant to the present world situation. If any country wishes to discuss the relevance of the Decalogue, we are ready to do so. Likewise, if we have stated that our top priority is nuclear disarmament, it is because it has logic and relevance and because it has always been the concern of the international community. The logic and reason of our priority in nuclear disarmament lie in the most prominent international agreements which are universally adhered to, namely the 1970 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the 1978 Final Document of the first special session on Disarmament (SSOD-I), which I believe are recognized and adhered to by most of us in the CD. But again, I repeat that we are open to any suggestions by members wishing to discuss nuclear or conventional weapons, or both, or any other issue, as long as there is a balance between these two items.

If members of the CD think that the time is not yet opportune to discuss those matters of concern and wish to discuss some or any single aspect of each issue, then we are willing to listen. In the context of nuclear disarmament, for example, we could start discussing the fissile material cut-off treaty (FACT) or negative security assurances (NSA). We believe that, in the end, the completion of our negotiation on these issues could strengthen our efforts to achieve comprehensive nuclear disarmament, as in the case of the NPT and the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). On the other hand, if members wish to discuss any element of conventional disarmament, such as anti-personnel landmines (APLs), my delegation is ready to do so. Even though we are of the view that the CD is the only appropriate forum to address this important and timely issue, we also welcome in principle any other endeavour aimed at

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eliminating this indiscriminate weapon, inter alia, the Ottawa Process, since those tracks could, in our view, also lead to the elimination and total ban of these inhuman weapons. Indonesia is very much concerned with the humanitarian effects resulting from the indiscriminate use of landmines. However, it is our belief that with regard to APLs, their total ban should apply also to those using "sophisticated technology" and not just to the traditional ones, for Indonesia cannot support a policy which implies technological discrimination.

When the first session of the CD started in January 1997, a strong feeling of optimism prevailed whereby this year's session would bring new hope for all of us in our endeavours to further accelerate negotiations in the field of disarmament. We entered this session with a common understanding that only with a sense of goodwill and of flexibility could the tangible success we achieved last year be repeated, when the long awaited CTBT was finally concluded. Regretfully, the slow progress, if not the lack of progress, in our deliberations proves that this seems not to be the case at this session, as is the case of our inability so far to finalize the CD's report to the United Nations General Assembly.

I believe that the word "flexibility" has become very familiar in our forum since it has been quoted and repeated many times during our deliberations. We have been listening attentively to tens, or perhaps hundreds of statements and lectures on the need for flexibility in order to solve our problem and achieve significant progress in our deliberations. Many times we have heard pledges and promises to be flexible, and also cooperative, in finding solutions to our divergences of views.

However, it is unfortunate that so far this "sacred" word has only been floating in the air most of the time during this 1997 CD session. What we have in fact witnessed in the last few months is exactly the opposite. An attitude of inflexibility has dominated our deliberations. For the sake of sometimes rather narrow national interests, we have somehow wasted our time, energy and even perhaps our resources. Moreover, because of our inflexibility we have missed the opportunity to achieve the concrete results prescribed by our mandate which are also the wish of the international community. We should observe all these points with regret and concern.

If, during this session, lack of flexibility has hampered our work and led us to a deadlock, there is nothing that my delegation can do to help solve this problem. Therefore, if my delegation has a wish, it will be a simple one. We wish that in the coming sessions of 1998 we can again make progress in our deliberations, and we hope that the spirit of cooperation, goodwill and flexibility will again prevail in this august assembly.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Indonesia for his statement and for his kind words to me. I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Ms. HAND (Australia): I would just like to make a simple comment to the assembly this morning, noting on behalf of Ambassador Campbell, who is presently away leading the Australian delegation to the negotiations in Oslo, that Ambassador Campbell has concluded bilateral discussions with all but a very small number of, so far, unavailable delegations. His consultations, which he continued last week, continue to yield interesting insights substantially supporting those conclusions he offered to colleagues in his statement to the plenary last week. From the Australian point of view, we welcome the suggestion made by Ambassador Akram that the President undertake consultations with regard to the work of all four Special Coordinators in the inter-sessional period. Ambassador Campbell, I know, looks forward to participating in consultations on APLs or any of those other issues in any way that the President would find useful.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, allow me first of all to convey to you the satisfaction of my delegation at seeing you conducting our work. You may count on our support and cooperation.

The delegation of Mexico would like to express appreciation for the reports submitted by the Special Coordinators on improved and effective functioning, the expansion of membership, the agenda and the question of anti-personnel landmines. I would like to convey to them the appreciation of my delegation for the efforts they made to discharge and complete the mandates entrusted to them by the Conference on 26 June 1997. The reports on the agenda, improved and effective functioning and on expansion of membership contain very useful analytical elements that will lead the Conference to continue to reflect on each of these important items in the future. I have asked for the floor today to refer briefly to the reports submitted on 14 and 28 August by the Special Coordinator on anti-personnel mines. As the Conference will remember, the question of anti-personnel mines was the subject of many proposals and lengthy consultations. On 26 June it was decided to appoint a Special Coordinator entrusted with conducting consultations on a possible mandate on the question of anti-personnel landmines, to take into consideration the proposals and opinions on the matter and to submit an early report to the Conference on Disarmament.

The delegation of Mexico announced on that occasion that it would not oppose consultations being held with a view to determining whether there is consensus in the Conference on Disarmament to negotiate a legally binding agreement for the total banning of anti-personnel mines. We emphasized that such an appointment would not imply that the Conference had decided to embark on negotiations on anti-personnel mines, much less that an arrangement had been established to negotiate on any aspect of the mines problem. On this understanding, the delegation of Mexico agreed to the appointment of a Special Coordinator on mines.

It is well known that Mexico has participated in the Ottawa Process since its inception with a view to achieving a total ban on anti-personnel landmines before the end of this year. A binding instrument to this end is now being negotiated in Oslo, and the delegation of Mexico is participating actively in those negotiations. Within a few hours I myself will be in Oslo

(Mr. de ICAZA, Mexico)

heading our delegation. We are not convinced, as we have stated on many occasions, that the Conference on Disarmament is an appropriate forum for the early conclusion of negotiations for a ban on the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. The reasons are few in number and well known to all, but they are powerful and worth repeating.

Anti-personnel landmines should be completely proscribed. They are indiscriminate weapons whose use is a violation of international humanitarian law. Twenty-five thousand victims a year are more than enough to make the achievement of a legally binding total ban on these weapons a matter of the utmost urgency. Treaties and conventions in the field of international humanitarian law in which a balance is sought between military requirements and the protection due to non-combatants have been and should be negotiated in ad hoc open-ended forums in which decisions are adopted by a majority.

The Conference on Disarmament is not the appropriate forum to negotiate rules of international humanitarian law. It has other objectives and other priorities. In this sole multilateral forum for negotiations on disarmament and arms control we are seeking to balance the legitimate security needs of States with the urgent need to preserve peace and international security. Our priorities are the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and a balanced reduction of armed forces and conventional weapons. It is doubtful whether such a balanced reduction can be achieved by eliminating conventional weapons one by one.

But in addition, the Conference on Disarmament is not conspicuous for rapidity in its negotiations. The banning of anti-personnel mines cannot wait for decades. The time has come. Allow me here to depart for a moment from my written text to say that, of course, I fully subscribe to the argument used in this room this morning by the distinguished Ambassador of Ireland.

Notwithstanding these considerations, the delegation of Mexico agreed that consultations should be held to determine whether there is among the membership of this Conference a common view on how to solve the humanitarian drama of the existence of anti-personnel landmines.

In his report of 14 August, the Special Coordinator on anti-personnel mines outlined four possible options for a mandate, ranging from simultaneous negotiations on all questions related to a total and effective ban on anti-personnel landmines to a mere review and discussion of the world situation regarding these weapons. In a forum where no votes are taken, where decisions are taken by consensus, the degree of support enjoyed by one option or another is of little importance. Assessments as to where majorities or minorities lie are subjective and are beside the point. That is why consultations were asked for and not a head count. What is important is to identify areas of possible consensus.

We are not surprised that there is a wide spectrum of opinions in the Conference on Disarmament on how to address the problem of mines. We were expecting it. There is no consensus in this Conference to embark on negotiations on a complete ban on anti-personnel mines by means of a legally

(Mr. de ICAZA, Mexico)

binding agreement, to be achieved as soon as possible, in response to the United Nations General Assembly's call to all States in resolution 51/45 S. On the basis of the information provided by the Special Coordinator on mines, it seems unlikely that a consensus along these lines can be reached in this forum in the foreseeable future. So much for the argument that negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament would bring in the major producers and exporters. Apparently some of them do not wish to ban anti-personnel mines either in this or in any other forum.

The Special Coordinator has made no recommendation regarding institutional arrangements. He did well to refrain from doing so, for any recommendation on this matter would have gone beyond the terms of his mandate, in which references to institutional arrangements that appeared in the draft decision were purposely omitted.

The question of whether an arrangement to deal with anti-personnel mines should or should not be established, and the most appropriate moment to do so, depends not only on achieving a consensus on a possible mandate but also, and above all, on the decisions the Conference on Disarmament will take regarding the agenda and the programme of work.

In keeping with the decision of 26 June, the Special Coordinator on mines was to present an early report on his consultations. He has presented two. We thank him for them. We are now aware that there is no consensus in the Conference on Disarmament on a possible mandate to negotiate a complete ban on anti-personnel landmines.

The 1997 session of the Conference on Disarmament will end in the next few days. While we regret that it was not possible to begin substantive work on any of the items on the agenda, we think that useful thinking on the direction that the Conference on Disarmament should follow did take place this year. The work of the Special Coordinators falls in this context. Their contribution has been stimulating and enlightening. At the beginning of its 1998 session we will have to determine the agenda and the programme of work of the Conference. We will then examine the proposals made by all the delegations with all the respect they deserve.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Mexico for his statement and for his kind words to me. That concludes my list of speakers for today. I recognize the Ambassador of Pakistan.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): My delegation would like to make a very brief statement with regard to where the Conference on Disarmament finds itself today, at the end of its 1997 session. We have all heard in this hall over the past several weeks a spate of statements to the effect that the Conference on Disarmament has been unable to reach agreement on any negotiations for the current year. The impression has sought to be created that the Conference on Disarmament is an unwieldy and unworkable body which cannot reach agreement on any issue of substance and, therefore, other forums are perhaps more suited for serious work than this, the single multilateral negotiating body on disarmament.

(Mr. Akram, Pakistan)

I would like to say for the record today that this assertion is very far from the truth. The truth of the matter is that there are in this hall a number of delegations which have assumed positions on certain issues that are so trenchant and so rigid that they will not allow this forum to proceed with what is its responsibility to undertake negotiations on the items which are placed on its agenda. When we agree to place any item on our agenda, it is with the express understanding that that item is there on the agenda for the purposes of negotiation. Yet when we have turned to the task of creating our negotiation mechanisms, we have been prevented from doing so. And the root of the problems, I must state again for the record, is the refusal of a few States, a handful of States, to allow the Conference on Disarmament to negotiate on what is the highest priority for the international community, that is, nuclear disarmament. It is said that the Conference on Disarmament is an inappropriate forum for nuclear disarmament, that nuclear disarmament is an inappropriate subject for this Conference. But let us turn to our agreements. Let us turn to where we have achieved consensus. Wherever we have achieved consensus, we have all agreed that nuclear disarmament is the highest priority for the international community and that this is the single multilateral negotiating body. If you add two and two, it adds up to four, which means that this is the place where we should be negotiating on nuclear disarmament.

But some States claim that this higher responsibility is only for two or three or five States to negotiate, and the rest of us should deal with small, peripheral matters. Sometimes landmines, sometimes fissile material, sometimes some other issue that can be found on the rack that is not being dealt with elsewhere. It can be consigned to the rabble which constitutes the Conference on Disarmament. This is unacceptable to my delegation, and I believe that this is unacceptable to the majority, the "silent" majority, if I may say, of the membership of this Conference.

We are now faced with a situation where this refusal to acknowledge the work that has been done in this Conference this year on nuclear disarmament is likely, or at least threatens, to prevent this Conference from adopting even a factual report. It is shocking for my delegation to find some delegations resisting a factual reference in our report to the fact that a proposal was made by the Group of 21 to create an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, that a proposal was made by a group of 26 countries suggesting a concrete mandate for negotiations on nuclear disarmament. This was achieved by the group concerned after considerable work, considerable negotiations, and even if we did not work in the Conference as a whole, countries engaged in this hall did undertake very substantive negotiations in order to come forward with those agreed proposals and positions. And they were serious positions, serious proposals that could have opened the door for the Conference on Disarmament to make progress, not only on nuclear disarmament, but also on fissile materials and other issues that were proposed for consideration by the Conference on Disarmament this year. But all this was frustrated because of the trenchant positions of a handful of States.

(Mr. Akram, Pakistan)

We hope that this Conference will not end up this year with no report, because that is also a possibility in view of the positions that I have described. I hope that at this crucial moment that majority of delegations who are committed to the multilateral disarmament negotiating process will rally behind a position that is fair and just and not succumb to the kind of process that has frozen this Conference into inactivity in 1997.

Mr. HAN (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation had not planned to take the floor this morning, but it has been forced to do so by certain circumstances. This morning the delegate of Israel mentioned my country and some others in his statement, groundlessly abusing my country, so I would like to speak briefly about this matter. My delegation categorically rejects the accusation put forward by the Israeli delegation and expresses great surprise at why the Israeli delegation spoke in that manner. It is a grave concern and worry of the international community that Israel is still occupying the territories of Arab countries and causing much suffering and sacrifice. It is not only certain countries or regions that are concerned. It is the concern of the whole world. They are not telling the truth. They are raising such questions here this morning because they want to hide these facts and divert world attention from Israel's hostile policies. This is intolerable in the Conference on Disarmament, where it is common practice not to mention countries for one's own purposes. They are violating those practices in this Conference. I wonder what their purpose is in mentioning such things in this meeting. It is only to divert world attention from Israel. I appeal to this forum not to allow such behaviour in the future.

Mr. ZIABARI (Islamic Republic of Iran): I should congratulate you, Mr. President, upon the assumption of the presidency of this august body. I am very sorry that when I take the floor here for the first time, it is to ask for the right of reply. But that is beyond our control, so I shall be brief in addressing the allegations made here today by a delegate.

I should state the following in exercising the right of reply. We regret the allegations made by the delegate of Israel with regard to the peaceful nuclear activities of our country. It reveals why there were many reservations on the admission of Israel, a regime of oppression and occupation, to this august body. It is ironic to hear these allegations from a country whose stubborn pursuit of weapons of mass destruction and policies and programmes are a matter of concern not only to countries of the Middle East but also to the whole world. It is ironic to hear these allegations from a country which has not ratified the NPT and has not accepted the IAEA safeguards. As for us, we have ratified the NPT and have opened all our facilities to IAEA inspection. To sum up, I would like to remind the delegate of Israel that "people who live in glass houses should not throw stones". It is better for Israel to address the legitimate concerns of the international community over its determination to acquire weapons of mass destruction and to stop its deception and accusations.

Mr. AL-TIKRITI (Iraq) (translated from Arabic): In fact, like some of our colleagues, I did not intend to speak in this connection. However, the statements made by some of our colleagues and the declaration by the representative of Israel have prompted me to ask for the floor.

First of all, I personally do not want this forum to be the scene of diatribes between delegations or accusations made by one party against another. The responsibility of this Conference, as everyone is aware, is clear and well known and the functions assigned to the Conference are also clear and well known. I therefore propose that in this forum we should focus on the basic functions assigned to us and that the details, modalities and objectives of other issues should be left to other United Nations bodies and organizations and international forums since these issues fall within the scope of their responsibilities. If we wish to speak of weapons and how they are acquired, etc., this is a matter which, in my opinion, would require lengthy discussion over a period of weeks or even months. Therefore we should avoid a dialogue of the deaf or one which could become a philosophical debate to determine the sex of the angels.

The question of strategic weapons in the Middle East stems from a situation in which some countries of the Middle East, and I am speaking here of some of the Arab States, have acquired strategic weapons not on their own initiative but as a reaction to the fact that Israel had acquired strategic weapons in their most dangerous form, namely nuclear weapons. Of course, this is known to the international community and it is something on which we do not need to debate. Israel is continuing to occupy Arab land. This is a well-known fact. Therefore, Mr. President, if you will allow me, I would like to reiterate my proposal that, in this forum, we should focus on our basic duties and avoid diatribes and mutual accusations.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Iraq for his statement. That concludes my list of speakers for today. I recognize the representative of Finland. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. REIMAA (Finland): Mr. President, let me start by congratulating you on the assumption of the presidency and assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation. The 1997 session of the CD has been a period of reflection after the successful conclusion of negotiations on the CTBT. During this year's session, we have been witness to intensive discussions on various topics which the CD might address next. It is evident that countries have different priorities depending on their national security concerns. However, in order to find common ground for future CD work, we need to determine which issues have realistic possibilities for obtaining concrete results within a reasonable time-frame. In our view, the CD cannot afford another year of reflection. The CD is a negotiating forum. It is important for the CD to be able to start real negotiations from the very beginning of the 1998 session. To make this possible, intensive consultations are needed during the inter-sessional period.

Finland was very pleased that the Conference agreed in June on the appointment of four Special Coordinators, on anti-personnel landmines, the

(Mr. Reimaa, Finland)

agenda, improved and effective functioning and CD expansion. This was an important step forward in practical work and, within the very short time available, all the four Coordinators were able to conduct extensive consultations and submit reports. All the Coordinators indicated, however, that there had not been enough time to come up with specific recommendations. For the credibility of the work of the Conference, it is necessary that the mandates of those Special Coordinators who need more time to conclude their work be extended. The Conference should give them the possibility of conducting inter-sessional consultations if they so wish. We would also like to emphasize the role of the President of the Conference in conducting appropriate consultations in the inter-sessional period to enable the Conference to decide upon its work effectively at the beginning of next year. We would also like to see a clear reference to this in the CD's annual report.

Finland continues to believe that the CD has an important role to play in the strengthening of global security and stability. It is the task of the Conference to review its functioning, membership and agenda in order to be able to respond to the expectations of the international community. The ideas reflected in the Special Coordinators' reports form a very good basis for further elaboration of those issues.

Finland was one of the three countries which in March 1997 made a proposal on the appointment of a Special Coordinator on anti-personnel landmines. We commend Ambassador Campbell for his diligent work as Special Coordinator on this issue and strongly support his request to continue his work during the inter-sessional period. We are well aware of the concerns of the international community for eliminating APLs, thereby reducing the number of innocent people who fall victim every year to the indiscriminate use of these weapons. We recognize the humanitarian impulse created by the Ottawa Process and the meeting that is currently taking place in Oslo. The Ottawa Process has greatly strengthened momentum towards a total ban on APLs.

We have stated repeatedly that Finland wants a global, verifiable and legally binding ban on APLs. In order to negotiate a global treaty, due consideration must be given to the national security concerns of the States involved. The CD is the forum where the security aspects of the ban on APLs can be properly addressed. The CD should agree without delay to the establishment of an ad hoc committee with a mandate to deal with anti-personnel landmines. This is an urgent issue that should not be linked to other issues.

And as to some statements just made during this plenary, I would only repeat that we respect the work of the Coordinators, including the very valuable work of Ambassador Campbell, and we should also respect the wish they have expressed in their reports to have more time to complete their tasks if they need it. As we understand the situation today, we have not yet reached a consensus on what basis we will finally be able to start real work on APLs.

To conclude, in this connection, I would like to state that another issue that we consider of great importance is the fissile material cut-off treaty. Negotiations on this should be started on the agreed mandate without further delay. We see the FMCT as an important step in the process of nuclear disarmament.

Mr. BOUCHAARA (Morocco) (translated from French): Just to ascertain your intentions, Mr. President. Do you intend to call informal consultations after this plenary meeting, so that we can tell the Finnish delegation informally what we think of its proposal?

Mr. RIVASSEAU (France) (translated from French): Very briefly, Mr. President, I would like to indicate that the spirit of the statement made by the Finnish delegation is in line with the views of my own delegation, and in the spirit that prompted the statement by Morocco I would like to indicate that I do not intend to respond in plenary to the statement by the Ambassador of Pakistan.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you for your statement. The distinguished representative of Morocco inquired how we are going to proceed. If you will recall, when we met for informal consultations yesterday, we agreed that there would be an informal plenary immediately after this plenary with a view to discussing the draft report to the United Nations General Assembly. I would like to repeat once again that we will be discussing the report to the United Nations General Assembly. If there are no other delegations wishing to take the floor, then I would like to adjourn this meeting and thereafter convene the informal plenary immediately. But before doing so I would like to stress once again, today being Thursday, if the delegations are interested in having the draft report in the official languages, we should have finished the consideration of the draft report this morning. That not being the case, we can continue our consideration of the report but I cannot guarantee that there will be translations of the report - if we are going to have a report in the end.

If there are no other delegations wishing to take the floor, I would like to adjourn this plenary and immediately thereafter convene the informal plenary. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held next Tuesday, 9 September, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 12 noon.